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## COMPLAINTS CHOIR TO THE TUNE OF NEW YORK, NEW YORK

### HOW COULD ANYONE THINK THAT WATER IS NOT A PUBLIC GOOD?

JOSEPH W. DELLAPENNA\*

*At the opening of the 2008 session of the Natural Resources Law Section of the Association of American Law Schools in New York, the approximately 70 law professors in attendance were invited to participate in a complaints choir.<sup>1</sup> The lyrics were prepared by James R.<sup>2</sup> and Mary Ann McCurdy, and Annecoos Wiersema,<sup>3</sup> and me. Jim, Mary Ann, and I presented the results to the session. As chair of the section, I was worried that we would find ourselves singing off-key in front of a bewildered or even hostile audience, but with the help of Marcilynn A. Burke<sup>4</sup> and Victor Byers Flatt,<sup>5</sup> both of whom proved capable singers, we soon had all 70 engaged in an enthusiastic sing-along—so enthusiastic, in fact, that there was a complaint from the room next door that they could not hear their speakers. I present the lyrics here in order to record the event for a skeptical posterity and for the benefit of those who were unable to attend the session.*

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\* Professor of Law, Villanova University; B.B.A., Univ. of Mich. (1965); J.D., Detroit College of Law (1968); LL.M. in International and Comparative Law, George Washington Univ. (1969); LL.M. (in Environmental Law), Columbia Univ. (1974). Professor Dellapenna served as Rapporteur of the Water Resources Committee of the International Law Association, in which capacity led the drafting of the *Berlin Rules on Water Resources* (2004), and is Director of the Model Water Code Project of the American Society of Civil Engineers, in which capacity he led the drafting the *Regulated Riparian Model Water Code* and the *Appropriative Rights Model Water Code*, as well as several other model legal instruments. He served as chair of the AALS Section on Natural Resources Law for 2007.

1. The concept of a complaints choir originated in Finland and has been replicated widely around the world over the past couple of years. Samples can be found at <http://www.complaintschoir.org/choirs.html>, which links to videos and the texts of various complaints choirs. In my view, the ones from Birmingham and Helsinki are the best.

2. Professor of Law, Gonzaga University. Jim and Mary Ann agreed to take on the task of converting various complaints into singable lyrics and to find a suitable tune, as well as suggesting some of the complaints.

3. Professor of Law, Ohio State University. Annecos collected some suggestions of complaints from her students.

4. Professor of Law, University of Houston.

5. Professor of Law, University of Houston.

1.

It's getting dam hot.  
Ice melting out there.  
We cannot find a town  
That has clean air.

2.

Time drags on in class.  
No two clocks the same.  
Classtime laptop games  
Drive profs insane.

3.

Hey, Linda Darnell!  
What happened to her?  
And how 'bout Cornell Wilde?  
We'll all be a blur.

4.

Hamster with jetlag  
Gets Viagra dose.  
Feels better quickly, but  
Don't stand too close.

\*\*\*

*To heck with acronyms and trees,  
Purple sage and big RV's  
LOL ASAP!*

5.

Chuck Norris smiles on  
Thursday primary thing.  
Chuck thinks President Huckabee  
Has a nice ring.

6.

Solution is Markets,  
Confused people think.  
For each and every problem.  
Oink, oink! Wink, wink!

7.

Cattle BLM can't control  
Mining law is absurd.  
They take Indians' land and oil  
Don't keep their word.

8.

Huggy, cute polar bears  
Are doomed—but, who cares?  
As long as LazyBoy builds  
Reclining chairs.  
(Watch polar bear reruns on tv.)

\*\*\*

*USA Today says price of oil  
Has not impeded economy as a whole  
Subway New York, Train, Tram New York!*

9.

Free agency makes,  
Good small market team  
Impossible to build.  
Pass the Jim Beam!

10.

Legal author's big dream:  
My students will be  
inspired by my treatise  
Truly meaningfully!  
(But they aren't.)

11.

When I walk, not drive  
Breathe yucky exhaust—cough cough!  
Smaller carbon footprint, but  
At my lungs' cost.

12.

The Olentangy River  
Contains only two species  
No fish, alligators or eels, just  
Pepsi bottles and geese.

\*\*\*

*Why don't laws just say what they mean?  
Jargon messed up, worse than teens.'  
Don't be a dork!  
Enjoy New York!*

